

river and Atti odai (tributary of Pambar) were found to be good habitat for grizzled giant squirrel. There is no published record of the occurrence of this species anywhere in Kerala. Sighting of six grizzled giant squirrels and many dreys in the riparian trees of Atti odai and Pambar river during the census gives hope of its survival in these places. Calls of the squirrels were heard from other parts of the sanctuary also. All sightings were of solitary individuals. The animal was seen feeding on seeds from the ripe fruits of Thutta (local name of a small tree on the riverside).

A detailed survey of the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary along with the adjacent Tamil Nadu forests

may be rewarding. Considering the extent of the riparian zone, the number of dreys sighted in the area and the spatial location of the calls heard from different parts of the sanctuary, the population could be in the order of 50-75 individuals in this area. In addition to its importance as a grizzled giant squirrel habitat, the sanctuary has a good number of spotted deer, gaur, sambar, wildboar, elephant, panther, human langur, bonnet macaque, peacock and a variety of birds of the dry deciduous region.

November 26, 1988. K. K. RAMACHANDRAN

3. INCIDENT INVOLVING A SNAKE AND A PURPLE HERON

On 7 October 1986, at about 4.00 P.M. as I was watching the activity pattern of Sambar *Cervus unicornis* in the marshes of Keoladeo National park, Bharatpur, I noticed a Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) standing from the sambar about 1.7 m away holding a snake in its bill. On closer examination with my telescope I realised that it was Checkered keelback of about 30-35 cm.

The bird took about five minutes to handle its prey. The snake struggled actively, coiling itself around the bill of the heron. To kill the snake the bird

started beating it on a babul tree, *Acacia nilotica*, for some time, then started devouring the entire snake from head to tail.

Interestingly, the purple heron is recorded as feeding on fishes, frogs, molluscs, aquatic insects, small rodents and young birds (Ali, Salim and Ripley, S.D. HANDBOOK Comp. Ed. 1983), but I do not find any published record of its feeding on snakes.

December 30, 1986. MD. NAYERUL HAQUE

4. ON THE PARENTAL CARE OF WOOD SHRIKE (*TEPHRODORNIS PONDICERIANUS*)

On 3rd April 1986, I spotted the nest of a common wood shrike in a horizontal branch of a cassia tree about 2-3 metres above the ground. There were 3 eggs and I decided to observe daily the activities, especially the feeding of the hatchlings. The eggs were hatched on April 14 and I could see three blind and naked chicks well-protected by the parent from the hot sun. I waited for a few more days before taking photographs. I expected that feeding activity would be limited in the early stages, and would increase as the chicks grew, and demanded more food. On April 28th I saw that the chicks were fairly big and overflowing from the small cup-shaped nest. I also found that the lighting was ideal and temperature tolerable. I built a temporary hide, positioned my camera and waited for the arrival of the parents. The parents were suspicious for a while and finally decided to feed the young ones. They were noisy and I saw them sitting on a nearby acacia tree. One of them had something in its beak. The first arrival was the one without anything and it appeared to me that

this was an inspection visit, to see everything was alright. Then the other parent followed with the food. During my two hours' observation I could see the birds were mainly bringing praying mantis, grasshoppers and honey bees. It appeared to me that the chicks accepted the food, large or small, depending on how hungry they were. Initially all the three accepted both large and small prey. But gradually I saw them rejecting the big prey, like the praying mantis. Soon, the temperature was rising and I was feeling uncomfortable in the hide. The birds also appeared to be bringing food with lesser frequency. Then I saw one of the birds, after feeding the young ones, stayed in the nest. It sat on the brim of the nest and puffed up the breast feathers and soon the young ones buried their heads in the feathers. This behaviour was definitely to protect the young ones from the hot sun.

October 21, 1986.

V. SUNDARARAMAN